Chairman and Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, DGHS, and Senior Officers of DGTD, BICP, CSIR, Director, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad, Director, Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow etc. The recommendations of the Committee are under the consideration of the Government.

Scope of Biotechnology

4460. SHRI GOPI NATH GAJAPATHI: Will the PRIME MINSTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is great scope to use our bio–technology to increase agricultural production in the country; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to utilise and improve our bio–technology to raise agricultural production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): (a) Biotechnology has a very important role to play for increasing agricultural productivity.

(b) The Department of Biotechnology has initiated several focussed R&D programmes in crop biotechnology since March 1989. Th Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has been closely associated with these programmes. These programmes aim to evolve plant breeding aids and pre–breeding genetic stocks to accelerate existing plant breeding efforts. The various programmes are:

(i) Four nationally important crops e.g rice, mustard, chickpea and wheat are being addressed with genetical and biotechnological approaches to develop pest and disease resistance high yielding varieties.

(ii) Six centres for plant molecular biology (CPMB) have been set up since March 1990 in the existing institutions throughout the country for generating biotechnology research capability as well as trained manpower. Each CPMB is entrusted with a few crops having problem oriented basic and applied research programmes.

(iii) Department of Biotechnology has initiated a network programme on biological control of pets and diseases under integrated pest management.

(iv) Department of Biotechnology has launched the oil palm demonstration project in the states of Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh and Karnataka. These projects aim to demonstrate the feasibility of oil palm cultivation under irrigated condition over an area of the about 1000 has in each state.

(v) The tissue culture cardamom demonstration product project was launched by the Department in 1989.

(vi) The Department of Biotechnology has launched a major programme on technology development and demonstration of Biofertilizers.

(viii) Field activities and demonstration programmes of many of the projects are well advanced and the results can be seen during the VIII Plan period.

Performance of Industrial Sector

4461. SHRI GOPI NATH GAJAPATHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state: